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SUCCESS STORY

Supporting Nepal's Historic Constituent Assembly Election



Nepal's Election Commission briefed journalists at its OTI-supported Media Centre.



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Nepal Press Council workers monitored media reports during the election.

In August 2006, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) began a 2-year, \$15,000,000 program in Nepal to bolster the current peace process, strengthen governance mechanisms, and support positive, nonviolent community engagement in the country's political, social, and economic future. The objectives of the program are to:

- 1. Increase access to information and diversify public debate on issues critical to political transition, and*
- 2. Increase the effectiveness of key political transition institutions.*

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April 2008 – With the successful execution of the Constituent Assembly (CA) election on April 10, 2008, Nepal's political transition has passed a critical milestone. Voter turnout was around 60 percent, and the CA will be tasked with drafting Nepal's new constitution.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) worked closely with Nepal's Election Commission (EC) to support several successful election-focused projects. OTI provided support to establish a media center where national and international journalists could attend the EC's daily press conferences. A main conference hall, an audio-visual area with live-broadcast capabilities, and an Internet room were furnished. In the period leading up to and following the election, the EC held 22 press briefings at the center, and an average of 300 journalists visited the center daily. In addition, OTI furnished equipment to the Nepal Press Council for a large-scale media-monitoring program. The initiative, the first of its kind in Nepal, allowed the council to monitor the electronic media's adherence to the Election Code of Conduct on behalf of the EC.

OTI also supported the EC's information dissemination efforts, which included a 40-minute voter education TV program that was broadcast five times on three major stations. In addition, two public service announcements (PSAs), one on the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and the other on the vote-counting process, were developed and aired. Furthermore, a large-scale voter education radio campaign produced 11 radio spots that were aired in 16 languages throughout the country.

To manage post-election expectations, OTI collaborated with the EC on a "What Happens After the Polls Close?" campaign. Through this effort, more than 62,500 copies of a two-page document explaining the results process were distributed. The information was also circulated via e-mail and printed in seven newspapers (total circulation, 376,000) in the Kathmandu Valley and the eastern Terai.

Finally, in an effort to reduce the potential for post-election violence, OTI supported an initiative to broadcast anti-violence PSAs featuring local civic leaders and 21 prominent political candidates. The PSAs were aired after the elections on four major regional FM radio stations in the central and eastern Terai.

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